Consortium for Elections and Political Process Strengthening

CEPPS/IFES Quarterly Report: April 01 – June 30, 2014

IRAQ: Elections Support Project
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I.   SUMMARY

The Elections Support Project (ESP) had several notable accomplishments this reporting period. In the lead-up to the April 30, 2014 Council of Representatives (CoR) elections and the Iraq Kurdistan Region (IKR) Governorate Council Elections (GCE), IFES provided the Independent High Electoral Commission (IHEC) with support in the automated voter registration (AVR) system, accreditation of observers, special needs voting (SNV), and out of country voting (OCV). A number of workshops were implemented to target various aspects of election management (see Table 1).

The most notable achievement this quarter was the successful preparation and conduct of two elections. Other achievements in this reporting period were implementation of the AVR process and the introduction of the electronic registration cards. IFES played a significant role in these processes.

Also during the period, the IHEC faced a tense political situation but demonstrated to be capable of conducting smooth and effective electoral events regardless of the political situation and the deteriorating security conditions. The IHEC also made improvements in the electoral process in Iraq, the most notable being the introduction of technology in the electoral process by using electronic voter cards as well as new media for public outreach. However, as with any elections,

acceptance of the results will be key for the formation of a new government in the aftermath of the elections as well as for the promotion of stable security conditions in the country.

In addition, IFES observed the proceedings of the Election Day via four teams deployed to Erbil.

Finally, IFES issued three sub-grants supporting voter education efforts for the April 30 elections as part of its second round of sub-grants. It is estimated the projects reached about 20,000 people through its workshops, seminars, conferences and other activities throughout Iraq. The activities had a particulat emphasis on the 2014 CoR electiosn and some of them had a special focus on the use of the electornic voter card and the IHEC call center. The projects also fostered NGO-IHEC collaboration as the IHEC GEO staff were invited to participate in the various activities undertaken by the NGOs.

Throughout the reporting period, IFES provided international stakeholders with key analytical information on the electoral context and process, including legal changes. IFES also conducted a number of briefings and presentations on the CoR and IKR GC elections for USAID and the US Embassy Political Section, including a presentation for the US Embassy and USAID representatives in Erbil, on April 3, which was was also attended by the US Embassy representatives based in the Baghdad and Bashra offices via video teleconference and a presentation at the US Embassy in Baghdad for international observers and international community members on April 17.

On April 13, IFES' Chief of Party (CoP) met with the Deputy Assistant Administrator for USAID's Bureau for the Middle East, USAID's Iraq Mission Director and other representatives of USAID Iraq to present the project and to discuss the challenges and opportunities posed by the upcoming elections and how a government formation period may affect implementation of USAID's programs. On April 28, the Chief of Party conducted a conference call with professional staff from the Senate Foreign Relations Committee and the House of Representatives Foreign Affairs Committee. IFES also authored and released a post-elections Questions and Answers (Q&A) on the 2014 Council of Representatives elections, which was publish at the IFES website. This post-election Q&A discussed the importance of the elections for the future of Iraq and provided an initial assessment of the conduct of the elections. On June 11, IFES' CoP and Deputy CoP participated in the 2014 Iraq CoR Elections Lessons Learned and Tasks Ahead roundtable organized by the European Union (EU) and delivered a presentation on the elections preparations, conduct, and lessons learned.

On June 17, due to the escalating conflict in Iraq (*please see the security section below*) and following the posture of USAID to send some of its staff to either Erbil, Basrah, or outside the country to work remotely as a precautionary measure, IFES-Iraq evacuated the IFES expat team based in Baghdad. The IFES-Iraq expat team has been working remotely and will return to Baghdad when the conditions permit. IFES-Iraq's Chief of Party, accompanied by the Local National Project Manager, relocated to Erbil to manage project affairs.

Since IFES' evacuation from Baghdad, IFES' Advisors worked remotely from home to continue the development the IHEC's Strategic Plan outline. Once finalized, it will be shared with the IHEC Strategic Planning Committee for review and feedback. Also, they worked on the IHEC's outreach

campaign plan for the continuous voter registration (CVR) scheduled to roll out end of September. They also developed concept papers, agendas, and training materials for the up-coming workshops.

Table 1: IFES-facilitated Trainings and Workshops, April 01 – June 30, 2014.

Date	Location	Title	Total Participants	# of Female Participants	NO/GEO Participant Distribution
April 7	Baghdad	Training session on seats allocation formula for the GEOs Managers	35	1	15/20
April 3-4	Erbil	Training to journalists on media coverage related to the CoR elections	37	2	0/0*
April 7-9	Erbil	Training to journalists on media coverage related to the CoR elections	22	6	0/0*
April 25	Baghdad	Protocol training for the Public Outreach Department staff in charge for the ceremony of signing the Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) between the IHEC and the Arab League	5	2	5/0
Total workshop participants			**99**	**11**	**20/20**

- *The workshops were funded and organized by the IHEC with IFES' programmatic support and attended by the journalists.*

II. POLITICAL AND ELECTORAL CONTEXT

Security

During this reporting period, Iraq experienced a sustained level of escalated violence. In the pre-election period, violence further escalated with the Islamic State of Iraq and al-Sham (ISIS) forces increasingly targeting the Government of Iraq (GoI), IHEC employees, and election in all of Iraq's regions. On April 11, the Iraqi Deputy Prime Minister escaped an assassination in the Abu Graib district. On April 13, the Speaker of the Parliament survived an assassination attempt in southern Kirkuk.

Concerns over the security situation overshadowed the overall successful conduct of the elections. There were a number of security incidents reported at polling centers across Iraq, despite the tight security and curfews imposed to ensure the security of electoral operations. Nationwide, 12 people were reportedly killed during the election days, among them two election officials. The main areas of violent attacks were concentrated in the northern Iraq – in Ninewah and Salahidin – as well as in Anbar. A number of polling stations in these governorates were not opened due to the poor

security situation. Fears about personal security kept some voters from going to the polls. However, incidents were largely limited to individual bombings and mortar attacks; mass casualty attacks threatened by ISIS - sometimes also referred to as Islamic State of Iraq and the Levant (ISIL) failed to materialize, which has been attributed to Iraqi authorities' attention to security concerns.

Hovewer, beginning of June, the general security situation in Iraq rapidly deteriorated when the ISIS and supporting armed groups began a major offensive in the north against the Iraqi government, following earlier clashes, which began in December 2013.

The ISIS and aligned forces captured several cities and other territory, beginning with an attack on Samarra on June 5, followed by the seizure of Mosul on June 9, and Tikrit on June 11. As the Iraqi Security Forces (ISF) fled south on June 13, the Kurdish Peshmerga forces took control of Kirkuk. By late June, Iraq had lost control of its border with Jordan and Syria.

On June 10, Prime Minister Maliki asked the Parliament for a state of emergency to be approved in response to the large scale ISIS offensive in northern Iraq. Hovewer, the Parliament failed to reach a quorum to vote on the request to introduce the state of emergency with only 128 of 325 MPs present.

On 11 June, insurgents advanced into the oil refinery town of Baiji, seizing the main court house and police station and setting them on fire. Mid-June, insurgents began to advance up over to central and northern part of Iraq following the ISF capture in Anbar. They also took full control of the city of Tikrit and continued their advance towards Baghdad.

On 13 June 2014, the ISF had gathered in the town of Samarra and claimed to have regained control of parts of Salahadin province. On 19 June, the ISF claimed to have regained full control of the Baiji oil refinery, after heavy fighting with the ISIS fighters.

On June 15, the United States announced that it was evacuating an undisclosed number of workers from the U.S. Embassy in Baghdad in a tacit acknowledgment that the situation in Baghdad had become unpredictable and that violence seemed likely.

On June 24, the U.S. military began deploying assessment teams in Baghdad to evaluate the state of ISF and decide how to help them counter an Islamist insurgency. About 90 additional troops arrived in Iraq to begin helping establish a Joint Operations Center in Baghdad with the ISF.

On 26 June, the ISF launched an airborne assault on Tikrit and an all-out ground offensive two days later in an attempt to recapture the city. However, by June 30 the assault had stalled and government troops pulled back from Tikrit to the south, after meeting stiff resistance, in an attempt to regroup.

Since then, the military situation has remained broadly stable in Iraq, with ISIS' offensives reduced in tempo. It is likely that the ISIS forces are attempting to consolidate power in gained territories and are working to make small-scale but strategic hits in the northern Sunni majority cities. However, the violence ongoing in Salah al-Din and Diyala provinces. In Anbar, activities continue

to intensify as the moved to secure interior lines between their bases in Syria and Iraq. The situation in Baghdad remains constant. The large numbers of the ISF volunteers dressed in civilian clothing, with pieces of the ISF uniform, continue to provide additional security at government buildings and mosques. The majority of volunteers are placed at locations in the south, and within Shi'a districts. Furthermore, there were members of the Mahdi Army dressed in black uniforms at government checkpoints (CPs) in southern Baghdad.

On June 29, the ISIS changed their name to Islamic State (IS), and declared a 'caliphate', which includes Syria and Iraq. They then declared Abu Bakr al-Baghdadi as the Caliph and leader of all Muslims.

Elections Preparation and Conduct

The reporting period was marked by intense preparations for the CoR elections and IKR GCE, both of which took place on April 30, 2014.
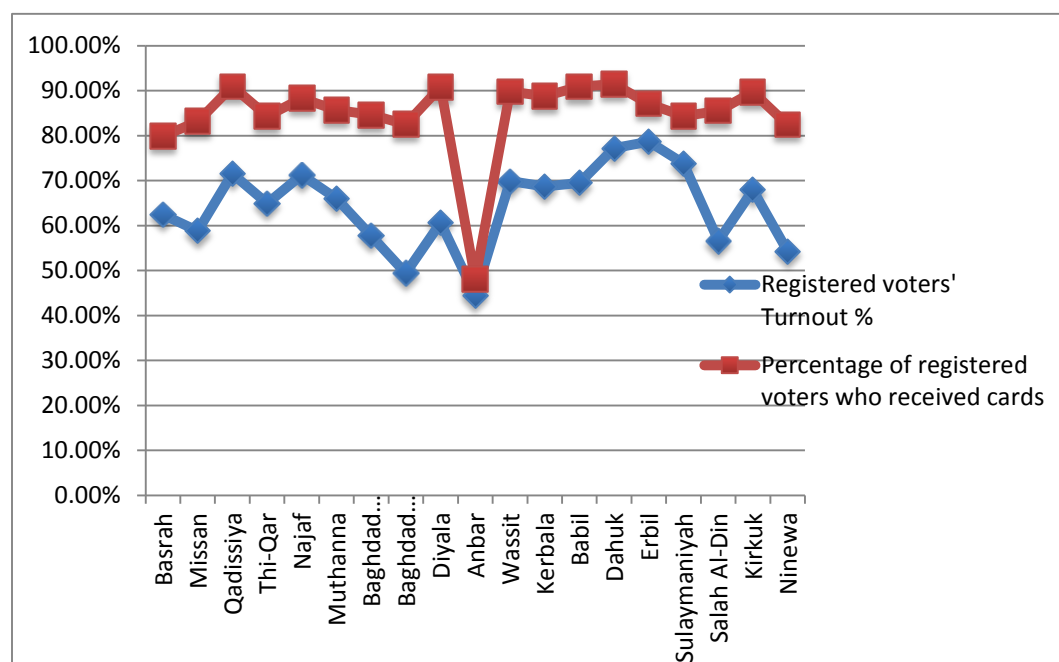The IHEC established over 8,600 polling centers and over 51,000 polling stations and recruited over 300,000 pollworkers for these elections. Iraqis residing abroad in 20 countries were also able to participate in the elections through out-of-country (OCV) voting. About 21.1 million Iraqis registered to vote.

International and local observers, political entity agents and the media observed the elections to ensure that they are free and fair. The IHEC accredited over 250,000 political entities agents, approximately 100,000 domestic observers, and over 1,000 international observers. In addition, 2,300 domestic and 357 international journalists reported on the elections. All stages of the voting process were open to the observers.

Ahead of election day, the IHEC distributed, till April 25 (the deadline for distribution), over 18 million electronic voter cards. The electronic voter cards were a novelty during this election cycle and were introduced as an anti-fraud measure to prevent multiple voting.[1] Over 18 million registered voters picked up their electronic cards from over 1,400 distribution centers nationwide, according to the IHEC data. Table 2 below provides an overview of the trends in turnout vs the percentage of registered voters who picked up their electronic voter cards, with the lowest figures observed in Anbar, due to the security condictions in that governorate.

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[1] Details about the electronic voter cards can be found in IFES' publication *Elections in Iraq: April 30 Council of Representatives Elections* available at:
http://www.ifes.org/~/media/Files/Publications/White%20PaperReport/2014/IFES%20Iraq_FAQ_CoR%202014%2 0Elections_Eng.pdf

Table 2: 2014 Council of Representatives Elections Turnout (general voting) and Electronic Card Distribution

Source: IHEC data

On April 27 and 28, Iraqi voters residing abroad cast their votes in 20 countries through the out-of-country voting (OCV) process. On April 28, over 800,000 members of the Iraqi Security Forces (ISF), prisoners, and hospitalized individuals voted in a process known as "special voting". The general voting took place on April 30 with turnout reported at 62 percent with approximately 21.5 million registered voters going to the polls. Simultaneously, the IKR GC Elections took place on April 28 (for members of the Iraqi Security Forces (ISF), prisoners, and hospitalized individuals) and 30 (general voting).

The polling proceeded smoothly with the majority of polling centers open during the regular voting hours of 7 a.m. to 6 p.m. The electronic devices and electronic cards functioned without major glitches. A few minor issues with fingerprint reading and cards were addressed immediately by the IHEC staff.

IFES observed the proceedings of the SNV and general voting via four teams in Erbil. The opening of the observed polling stations proceeded in an organized and timely manner. There were no security incidents observed. No major problems or malfunctions were observed in either the 28th or the 30th with the identification devices.

Figure 1: SNV voting in Erbil, April 28, 2014

The counting of votes took place in polling stations immediately after closing of polls. The re-count of votes, also a novelty during this election cycle, was conducted at 57 re-count and sorting centers. All ballot boxes were transported to these centers directly from the polling stations and all ballots were recounted. However, the counting process for out-of-country and special need voting took place in the governorates count centers on May 1, 2014.

The final number of complains received for the CoR elections was 2030, out of which 107 were categorized as red. The total number of complaints received for the Kurdistan GCE were 87, out of which there were no red complaints.

Figure 2: Anbar IDPs polling station in Erbil, April 30, 2014

The initial results were published in three newspapers for a period of three days. Political entities were able to challenge the results by submitting an appeal to the IHEC's National Office or any of its Governorate Electoral Offices (GEOs) within three days starting from the last day of

publication.

The elections received substantial international media coverage and interest. The UN Security Council, the Arab States League, and U.S. officials commended the people of Iraq for demonstrating their commitment to a peaceful, inclusive and democratic political process, and expressed appreciation to the IHEC for ensuring the elections were Iraqi owned, held on time, and guided by international standards.

Results Announcement

On May 19, at a press conference held in Baghdad, the IHEC announced the final uncertified results of the 2014 CoR elections. The announcement of results followed the conclusion of the full recount and the process of adjudication of complaints. Initially, the IHEC had estimated the announcement of results 20-30 days after the election and it met this commitment by announcing the results within the lower end of the estimated timeframe.

Following the announcement, the Electoral Judicial Panel (EJP) and the IHEC began receiving the CoR elections appeals on May 27. The period for submitting appeals was due to close on May 29. However, due to the religious holiday in honor of Imam Kadhim and the prolonged heightened security arrangements, including closure of government buildings, the period was extended to June 01. A total of 893 appeals challenging the CoR results were received, with the highest number (454) being in Baghdad and the lowest number (2) being in Sulaimania.

On May 22, the IHEC announced the results of the IKR GCE. According to the IHEC, in the Erbil Governorate, the Kurdistan Democratic Party (KDP) won the first place, Patriotic Union of Kurdistan (PUK) took the second place followed by Change (Gorran). In Sulemaniya, Gorran won, PUK took the second place and KDP came third. In Duhok, the KDP won the first place, followed by the Islamic Union, and the PUK came third, while Gorran took fourth place. Following the announcement, the IHEC received 28 appeals challenging the IKR GC elections results. The highest number of 19 appeals was received in Sulaimania and, the lowest of 8 in Duhouk.

On June 16, the Federal Supreme Court (FSC) certified the 2014 CoR elections results and sent them to the Presidency of Iraq. The FSC certified all the names submitted by the IHEC with exception of four candidates with pending criminal cases.

The Prime Minister Nouri Maliki's alliance won the CoR elections taking 92 of the 328 seats, but fell short of a majority. Its two main Shia rivals, Ammar al-Hakim's Muwatin and the Ahrar movement loyal to Moqtada al-Sadr, followed with a combined 57 seats.

Government Formation

According to Article 54 of the Iraq Constitution, the President, by a decree, should call upon the CoR to convene within fifteen days from the date of the ratification of the election results. Accordingly, the first session should happen on July 1 and should be chaired by the eldest member to elect the Speaker and his two deputies by an absolute majority. According to Articles 70 and 71, a new President is elected within thirty days from the date of CoR first convening, by two-

thirds majority. Finally, according to Article 76, the President should charge the nominee of the largest CoR bloc with the formation of the Council of Ministers (CoM) within fifteen days from the date of President election.

Several notable political developments took place at the end of May. The State of Law Alliance (SLA) formally nominated Maliki for a third term. The Sadrists continued with the anti-Maliki stance while offering an alternative form of a "national unity" model to Maliki's "majority government" approach. Meanwhile, the Islamic Supreme Council of Iraq (ISCI) maintained a neutral posture while building influence through high-level engagements led by its leader, Ammar al-Hakim. For the Iraqi Sunni political groups, there were consistent complaints with regards to the accuracy of the results of the elections in the crucial provinces of Anbar and Kirkuk. The most prominent Iraqi Sunni group, Mutahidun, continued to reject a third term for Maliki while indicating that another candidate from the pan-Shi'a National Alliance (NA) would be acceptable. The Iraqi Kurdistan President and leader of the Kurdistan Democratic Party (KDP), Masoud Barzani, stated that the Iraqi Kurds still have strong objections to a third Maliki term and that they will seek to find a "real partner" in the upcoming government in Baghdad.

Throughout the period, Prime Minister Nouri al-Maliki and the SLA continued to express confidence that they are in a leading position to form the next government. Maliki claimed that he has the support of 175 members of the Council of Representatives (CoR). The SLA's Iraqi Shi'a opponents, primarily the Sadrists and the Islamic Supreme Council of Iraq (ISCI), were working to revitalize the pan-Shi'a Iraqi National Alliance (INA), which competed against Maliki in the 2010 elections. The INA intended to position itself as the dominant Iraqi Shi'a political force. Secondly, the INA was working to maintain the role of the NA, which includes the SLA. For the Iraqi Sunnis, the main push was to maintain political unity as some Iraqi Sunni groups formed a group, *Etihad* (Union) that includes some members of the major Iraqi Sunni group Mutahidun. Mutahidun leader and Speaker of the CoR Osama al-Nujaifi was also seeking the assistance of Grand Ayatollah Ali al-Sistani to ensure fair representation of the Iraqi Sunnis. Sistani continued to avoid direct involvement in the political process, but expressed through his representatives that the next Iraqi government should be inclusive and avoid the possibility of marginalizing any group.

On June 25, PM Nouri al-Maliki rejected demands from rival politicians for an emergency national unity government. In his weekly address to the nation, he described such efforts as a "rebellion" against the Iraq Constitution. He vowed to stick to the timeline to create a new government while accusing Sunnis of "coordinating" the crisis.

On June 27, the President of the Iraqi Kurdistan Massoud Barzani made a statement to the Iraqi Government announcing his intention for Kirkuk to remain under the control of the Kurdish Peshmerga. The KRG wants the oil-rich city to be part of its territory, and the local population has welcomed the Kurdish forces to the city. Furthermore, Barzani has since informed international media groups that a referendum on Kurdish independence will take place within a few months.

On July 01, the first session of the Iraq's new Council of Representatives (CoR) was adjourned after Members of Parliament (MPs) failed to elect a new Speaker. The acting Speaker Mahdi al-Hafez called off proceedings after most of the Sunni and Kurdish members did not return after a break, causing lack of a quorum present. The CoR was scheduled to reconvene on July 08.

III. PROGRAM ACTIVITIES

Objective 1: IHEC's Strategic Planning, Monitoring, and Evaluation Capacity is Strengthened

Activity 1.1.2: Development of a "Strategic Planning Master Plan"

Developments in this activity have been limited due to the busy electoral schedule during this reporting period. Since as of the time of writing of this report, IFES was awarded a one year no-cost extension, IFES will work with the IHEC to implement this activity in the proposed no-cost extension period. While IFES had hoped to engage the IHEC on this issue, it was IHEC's decision to prioritize attention on the electoral calendar events and all Commissioners were engaged in such activities. Given that it is the Board of Commissioners (BoC) that plays the critical role in the development and approval of the Strategic Plan, while IFES attempted to engage them ahead of electoral events, that was not possible, likely due to the national and international importance of the CoR elections. IFES adjusted to this accordingly with the supply of novel technical advice during the 2014 electoral cycle – the introduction of technology into elections.

After the elections, IFES immediately moved to re-engage the IHEC on the strategic planning. Thus, at the beginning of June, IFES Organizational Management Advisor (OMA) met with Director of the General Secretariat of the Board of Commissioners (BoC) to review the status of the IHEC´s strategic planning process. With the elections and complaints process successfully completed, the Director offered to convene an immediate meeting with the Head of the Strategic Planning Committee to restart the process. Hovewer, due to IFES' team relocation, the meeting is still on-hold. In the meantime, the OMA has been drafting an outline of the strategic plan to be discussed with the Strategic Planning Committee for their feedback and further development into the strategic plan.

Activity 1.2: Support Development of Operational Plans for Electoral Events

IFES provided technical expertise and operational support for the CoR elections and IKR GC electoral operations this past quarter.

The IFES' Senior Elections Planning Advisor (SEPA) worked closely with the IHEC on the general and OCV operations. Due to the security situation in the Anbar governorate and the increasing number of IDPs, the SEPA developed and submitted recommendations to the IHEC Operations Department (OD) to ensure that a plan is developed to accommodate the participation of IDPs in the voting process. The recommendations included two options: to conduct voter registration for the IDPs to identify their numbers and locations, or to open special polling centers for IDPs to vote conditionally. The Operations Director endorsed IFES' recommendations and the BoC made a decision to adopt the second option and to open 112 PSs for the Anbar's IDPs conditional voting in 11 governorates.

IFES also supported the IHEC OCV Unit in developing procedures to retrieve the OCV results. IFES' SEPA developed and supervised the communication procedures testing. The testing procedures allowed the countries' managers to test their access to the National Office FTP server.

The testing and training provided by IFES resulted in a reduced number of rejected registrations by 21% compared to the OCV for the 2010 CoR elections.

IFES supported the IHEC Field Coordination Section in tracking the distribution of the electronic voter registration card. IFES advisors identified some errors in the daily tracking report and assisted the section in correcting the formulas generating the errors. This allowed the the IHEC to obtain accurate numbers from the field, and make decisions to increase the number of distribution centers in some provinces to accelerate the distribution process.

During the sorting and counting process, IFES continued to support the OD in tracking the ballot boxes from polling stations to the Count Centers (CCs) and from the CCs to the Data Entry Center (DEC). The tracking and analysis process allowed the IHEC to identify bottle necks in the process and shift resources to speed the results announcement.

The IHEC's use of electronic verification devices at the polling station level allowed for the first time to collect data from the verification devices to analyze data on participation, multi-voting cases or ballots manipulation. IFES advisor developed and submitted recommendations on the data collection and analysis process. The process of collecting the data is still ongoing. The data is downloaded from the devices' SD memory cards. IFES will assist the IHEC in producing statistical analysis of the data once the download from all governorates is completed.

The IHEC requested that IFES provide assistance in planning a coordination plan between the IHEC and other Government agencies to update the voter registry. IFES' SEPA developed recommendations that include specific protocols with the different government agencies. The IHEC Operations Director obtained approval from the BoC to implement a workshop with participation of representatives from the government agencies to discuss the implementation of the recommendations. The workshop is planned after Ramadan. The workshop will allow the IHEC to obtain updates from agencies such as: Ministry of Health, Ministry of Trade, Ministry of Migration to update the voter registry parallel to to continuously update the voter registry in parallel to the continuous biometrics registration. IFES' SEPA developed a draft concept and agenda for the workshop and presented these to the Operations Director.

Objective 2: IHEC's Internal Management Processes and Systems are Strengthened

Activity 2.1: Support to the IHEC's IT Systems and Infrastructure

IFES continued providing technical support to the IHEC IT and Database Sections in this reporting period by delivering assistance on the voter registration database and results tabulation software for the elections. IFES assisted in optimizing certain software procedures and resolved a number of software bugs.

IFES assisted the IHEC in troubleshooting a series of database issues pertaining to the elections. IFES' SEPA and Database Development Advisor (DDA) worked with the IT Section to solve the problems related to connecting to the FTP server to send registration data experienced by some of the OCV country offices during the second day of the OCV. IFES Advisors worked with the IT Section to resolve the problem and communication was restored. Also, some of the country offices

sending the conditional voters list to the IHEC faced problems accessing the FTP server. The issue was addressed by the IT Section, with IFES' assistance, and communication resumed successfully.

The Database/IT Management Consultant worked with the KREO IT, Database and Voter Registration, and Operation Sections to identify priorities and discuss the IT system required for successful conduct of the IKR GCE. The IT system in the KREO, particularly the SQL database and other customized software, were maintained regularly and the technical challenges were dealt with in a timely manner. A number of help desk computers that were not functional due to SQL misconfiguration were fixed. The Consultant also worked with the KREO Database and Voter Registration Section to address data conversion between MS SQL Server and MS Excel. The KREO required data conversion to verify voters' status and prepare voters statistical reports. The SQL based queries were developed and used to accomplishes both tasks.

The IFES Database/IT Management Consultant assisted the KREO's Database and Voter Registration Sections with development of SQL based queries used to produce statistical information about the voters. The KREO, as part of its decisions-making process, requires varying statistical information overtime to make informed decisions. He also worked on day-to-day IT system maintenance and troubleshooting of the MS SQL Server.

The IFES Database/IT Management Consultant also developed and trained the KREO counterparts on how to administrate, maintain, and troubleshoot the Special Voting Web system. Instructions were provided of software and Operating System's configuration required for maintenance of the system, of particular to configuration of production machine. The system is a web-based system to manage the data collection, data processing, and data dissemination for the Kurdistan SNV. The system was tested in production environment focusing on multiple web browser platforms: Internet Explorer, Google Chrome, and Firefox. The system is fully operational and ready for use in the KREO. At the moment, the system is configured to be accessed in the KREO office only. Discussions are ongoing for viability of the system to outside end-users.

By the end of May, the IFES' Database/IT Management Consultant handed over the Database and IT system works to relevant counterparts as his contract came to an end. All the system and paperwork developed over the course of the consultancy, which includes the KREO IT system assessment and the OCV and special need voting (SNV) webs, were handed over.

The KREO IT System Needs Assessment Report is designed to provide recommendations on improvement of the KREO IT system. IFES will follow up and assit in implementation of recommendations in the next quarter.

Activity 2.2: Capacity Building Support to the IHEC's Database and Software Developers and Staff

The IFES Database Development Advisor (DDA) worked closely with the Head of the Data Management Section (DMS) on development of the tabulation software for the CoR and IKR GC elections.

IFES' DDA helped to finalize the implementation and testing of the protected barcode for the form

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identification, processing and tracking, instead of using the PCs and PSs number for the results tabulation software in order to avoid data entry mistakes in the processing of the result forms.

IFES also helped to redesign the data entry forms to optimize the load on the application server, provide the cross-browser compatibility and polish the user interface. As the result, a number of the on-the-job trainings were provided to the new DMS staff members in designing of the optimal user interface for the web-based software. IFES' Advisors closely monitored the testing of the software and helped to address the issues discovered during the testing period. They assisted in optimizing certain software procedures and resolved a number of software bugs. As a result, the results tabulation software was finalized, tested and deployed to the production environment.

IFES' DDA provided assistance in finalizing the reinstallation of the server infrastructure of the Data Entry Center (DEC) prior to the beginning of the CoR and GC elections data entry operations. He helped to configure the database and application servers to ensure the optimal performance of the servers.

During the data entry operations for the 2014 CoR and IKR GC elections, IFES' Advisors were closely cooperating with their IHEC counterparts and helping to address various issues. During the elections day, IFES provided assistance to the IT Section to restore the normal operation of the FTP server used to upload OCV voter registration forms.

Following the IHEC Chief Electoral Officer (CEO), IFES' Advisor worked together with the DMS and DEC staff on resolution of the issues during the data entry operations and assisted with the optimizing of the OCV results forms processing. It was suggested to adjust the data entry procedure for the OCV in order to ensure the proper operation of the OCV results audit triggers. IFES' Advisors helped with the optimization of the audit trigger stored procedures for the OCV data entry, and assisted in addressing the issue of the duplicate barcodes, printed on the regular and special voting result forms.

Finally, IFES' Advisor helped to address the issue of the audit software interfering with the results tabulation software and degrading the performance of the DEC database servers. The DEC operations went smoothly without disruptions and the DEC and DMS staff was able to produce the election results on time.

In addition, IFES continued its daily assistance to the DMS staff, especially to new staff members, conducting working sessions to assist in addressing technical issues faced during development and deployment of the various types of IHEC in-house software, as well as continued to provide on-the-job trainings on HTML, CSS, basic Photoshop, JavaScript, jQuery, and T-SQL.

The IFES Database/IT Management Consultant also worked with KREO's Database/Voter Registration Sections and continuously assisted the KREO' Database/Voter Registration Sections with troubleshooting of the SQL Server Database.

At the request of the BoC Chairman, IFES prepared a short assessment of the tabulation software status. The report was submitted on April 28.

Activity 2.3: Support Improvements to Voter Registration (VR) Processes

IFES provided technical expertise on the Automated Voter Registration (AVR) process, as well as on the broader electoral operations this past quarter. This expertise was provided in the context of introduction of technology into the elections and direct preparations for the upcoming elections.

The SEP Advisor also assisted the Operations Department in redistributing voters in the high risk areas to safer polling centers and with coordinating the logistics operation to provide centers with additional electoral materials to accommodate the voters' redistribution.

In addition, IFES' SEPA developed recommendations for the IHEC Operations Department to adopt continuous voter registration. The recommendations were presented to the Operations Director and, after his endorsement, were sent to the Procedures and Training Section to start developing procedures for the voter registration update process. In addition, IFES developed a white paper on the implementation of a continuous voter registration system. Based on the paper, the Operations Director started planing a Directors' level workshop to discuss the presented options. The workshop is planned after Ramadan.

Activity 2.3.2: Support Operational Planning for Voter Registration Activities

The AVR project currently being implemented in Iraq is, in effect, a two stage project. The first stage culminated in the CoR elections with introduction and use of electronic cards The second stage will start in September 2014 with continuous automated voter registration of 21.5 million Iraqi voters which should be completed before 2018 CoR elections.

During the period under review, IFES has been involved with monitoring the implementation of the AVR project and advising on potential issues. Since the task of implementation was the responsibility of the vendor, the role of IFES was purely to determine potential issues. Hence, IFES acted in an advisory capacity and in long-term strategic and capacity planning through the presentation of reports.

IFES' Automated Voter Registration Consultant (AVRC) prepared a letter of concern regarding the possibility of misreading biometric reports from the special duplicate voter report. In a follow-up meeting with the Commissioner in charge for the AVR process, the AVRC and IFES' Chief of Party (CoP) clarified that a full judicial process using all available evidence, and not only fingerprints, should be used in determining culpability.

Following IFES' recommendation for a third-party audit by an accredited audit institution of the relevant systems to show that linking the ballot to the voter is not possible, the IHEC contracted the Bureau Veritas, a testing, inspection and certification company, to conduct an independent audit and received a certificate verifying that there is no possibility of linking the voter to the ballot paper. A copy of the certificate was released to IFES.

Activity 2.3.4: Advise the IHEC on the Implementation of Continuous Voter Registration Process and Decentralized Data Entry for Voter Registration

During this reporting period, IFES has continued to support the IHEC AVR project. IFES' SEP Advisor developed recommendations to the Operations Department to adopt continuous voter registration. IFES also developed and presented to the IHEC a white paper on continuous registration implementation requirements. The IHEC agreed to conduct a workshop, after the elections, to discuss the recommendations and requirements and to put an operational plan in place. IFES' recommendations will serve as the agenda and baseline for the workshop.

The IHEC's use of electronic verification devices at the polling station level allowed for the first time to collect data from the verification devices to analyze data on participation, multi-voting cases or ballots manipulation. IFES advisor developed and submitted recommendations on the data collection and analysis process.

Activity 2.5: Support to the IHEC Directorates of Finance and Administration with the Introduction of Financial Controls, Accounting, and Finance Systems.

Due to the busy pre-election environment during this reporting period, the majority of the organizational development and capacity building activities not directly related to the elections were put on hold by the IHEC.

However, in the post-elections period, IFES continued to assist the Finance Department and the Audit and Internal Control Department in conducting a review of the expenditure process of the elections budget and its management and implementation by the GEO´s as well as coordination between the GEOs and NO on budgetary issues. The IHEC maintained strict controls and revisions of the elections expenses and no major discrepancies have been found. All pending payments to vendors who provided services or materials for the elections were concluded. The IHEC did. However, encountere some difficulties in May and June due to the pending approval of the 2014 National Budget by the CoR. This has forced the IHEC to operate under strict limitations and a fixed expenditures celling in order not to delay salary payments or to reduce staff.

2.9.2 Review of the IHEC's Anti-fraud Mechanisms and Proposals of New Mechanisms to Detect and Deter Fraud

The IFES Electoral Legal Advisor (ELA) worked on a daily basis with the Legal Consultations and Complaints Section (LC&C) in order to provide the necessary advice to the Section Manger to address any technical legal issues raised during the investigations as well as in drafting the IHEC's response to the EJP on each appeal.

The ELA conducted daily meetings with the LC&C Section Manager to discuss the main issues raised by the complaints and how to address them by the investigation plans to be conducted by the GEOs and NO Complaints Units investigators. Additionally, the ELA followed up with the other IHEC relevant Departments on information required to finalize the complaints investigation.

Finally, the ELA provided support and technical advice to the LC&C Section during the appeals process to be included in IHEC's response to the EJP.

Objective 3: IHEC Capacity to Manage External Affairs with Key External Stakeholders is Improved

IFES continued its technical assistance to the IHEC to improve its ability to engage external stakeholders.

In April, IFES deployed the Organizational Management Advisor (OMA) and the Technical Program Associate (TPA) to Erbil in order to support the KREO with the preparations related to the conference for the international observers. The specific assistance delivered by IFES consisted of: revision of the list of materials to be included in the informational CDs to be giving to the international observers as part of their observations package; revision of translated version in English of the Procedures for the International Observers, which included important changes and recommendations made by the KREO; finalization of the draft agenda and in-site training for the staff prior to the International Observers Conference, which was held in Erbil on April 19.

Similar assistance was rendered by IFES to the IHEC International Observes Committee at the National Office since the beginning of the accreditation process for domestic and international observes. On April 24, IFES' OMA conducted an in-house protocol training for the Public Outreach Department (POD) staff in charge for the Memorandum of Understanding (MoU) between the IHEC and the Arab League signing ceremony. The training was conducted at the IHEC.

IFES believes that the IHEC improved significantly their regulations and accreditation procedures for domestic and international observers. The improvement was not only visible in the more detailed and comprehensive regulations following the International Standards on Elections Observations, but also in the capacity of the IHEC to respond efficiently and accurately to the various issues of the accretions process as well as effective coordination and assistance for the observers upon their arrival in country and the proper management of the final reports issued by the various elections observation missions.

On April 21, in Baghdad, IFES' Public Outreach Advisor and the Organizational Management Advisors participated as speakers in the event "Educational Conference for the 2014 CoR Elections", organized by the independent academic institution Al-Nahrain Center for Strategic Studies and contributing with this to the IHEC´s various information and dissemination activities leading up to the CoR elections.

There were issues between the IHEC and the several satellite channels due to a new registration regime by the Communications and Media Commission (CMC). The IHEC has a policy that it will only contract with broadcast outlets who are registered with the CMC and therefore to undertake to abide by its code of conduct. This meant that the KREO was unable to contract with several channels with reach across IKR to show the elections Public Service Annauncements (PSAs). The IFES ERA worked with the KREO at Director level to set up meetings with the broadcast channels to try and resolve the situation. These issues were partly resolved and three channels were able to broadcast PSA's after a concession was gained from the CMC about registration fees.

As a result of this situation, the IFES External Relations Adviser (ERA) advised the IHEC and the KREO to develop closer links with the Iraq Media Network (IMN) as they are able to broadcast the IHEC and the KREO materials for free under the CMC election code. An election channel was launched by the IMN which was broadcasting 24 hours a day and carrying the IHEC messages about the e-card both through PSAs and media coverage.

Activity 3.2: Conduct of National Surveys

During this quarter, IFES finalized the procurement process for a survey company to conduct the second national survey gauging public opinion and knowledge about the electoral process with a special focus on voters' experience with the CoR election as well as the electronic voter cards.

The draft survey questionnaire was finalized in early April 2014 and shared with the IHEC for their input and comments, some of which IFES incorporated. The questions focus on the CoR elections and voter's experience with the voting process, including fielding for questions on the experience with the use of electronic voter cards.

The anticipated period for the fieldwork was June 30, 2014. However, as IFES was working to finlize the sampling plan with the survey company, as a result of the security conditions throughout Iraq, the survey company proposed a revised plan that did not meet IFES' requirements and the need to have a nationally representative sample. As a result, IFES put the fieldwork on hold until the conditions became permissive enough to conduct the fieldwork in locations and through a sampling plan that allows for a nationally representative sample.

Activity 3.3.1: Development of a Strategic Communications Plan

The credibility of the IHEC as the institution for managing elections depends on its ability to proactively present itself to the media and to other stakeholders. To enhance its ability to do so, IFES Advisors have worked with the IHEC on a Strategic Communications Plan.

Developments in this activity have been limited due to the busy electoral schedule. Further, due to the IFES team relocation, the follow up meetings are still on-hold.

Activity 3.4: Capacity Building Training in the Design, Implementation and Conduct of Voter Information and Educational Programs

During this reporting period, IFES worked with the IHEC to design voter information and education campaigns related to the CoR and the IKR GC elections. IFES encouraged the IHEC to create easily identifiable voter outreach materials in order to ensure that the messages are authoritative and coherent. IFES worked with the various Public Outreach Department (POD) Sections on material content, design, and delivery. In addition, IFES assisted in incorporating changes into public outreach messages that occurred as a result of the introduction of the AVR process.

As a result of the External Media and GEOs Writing Skills Workshop, conducted by IFES in October 2013, the Media Section has published a booklet aimed at the IHEC staff members who write for the media and the external news media. The booklet contains electoral news writing

information, best practice guidelines for writing news stories for the press and electronic media, and a style guide for use in writing news stories. The booklet will be distributed internally to the IHEC staff and is planned to be used for external news media training, either undertaken by the IHEC or internally by the news organizations themselves.

3.4.1 *Training Program on Voter Education Methodologies and Use of New Media for Public Outreach*

The External Relations Advisor provided considerable input into the design of the agenda, selection of the materials, and evaluation of presentation methodology and style to individual trainers responsible for conducting trainings and presentations to the external steakeholders. Comments on the IHEC website were also given. The materials included the IHEC procedures and regulations, international standards, and selected BRIDGE materials. These were included in the handout material for the journalists' workshops.

As a result of the MoU signed by the IHEC with the Association of Journalists (AoJ) on March 17, 2014, the Head of the Media Section requested IFES' assistance to provide training to journalists on media coverage related to the upcoming CoR elections.

The workshops for journalists took place in Erbil on 3-4 April and 7-9 April, based on the training provided by IFES' ERA and following the Training of Trainers Media Workshop which was conducted by IFES for the IHEC staff in Erbil on March 27-29. The first workshop (which was conducted by trainers who had attended the IFES preparatory workshop) was attended by 37 senior journalists (of which two were women) and six outside broadcast crews and the second by 22 journalists of which six were women. Material covered included the electoral cycle, seat allocation, women's' quota, the IHEC procedures, including a demonstration of the electronic device.

The workshop provided an opportunity for the IHEC to consult with journalists about how they could communicate with them more effectively and provided a forum for journalists to ask questions about the election preparation including additional arrangements being put in place by the IHEC to facilitate the increasing number of IDPs being able to access their vote due to the deteriorating security situation in Anbar and Ninewah. The journalists who attended have requested that more of these workshops are available. A plan for further media training workshops based on this methodology through the auspices of the proposed IHEC Electoral Institute will be discussed at the Lessons Learned and CVR Planning Workshop for the Media Section scheduled for August.

As a result of this workshop, and following IFES' ERA recommendations, a number of demonstration events which were designed for broadcast by the news media on the use of the electronic devices were undertaken at the IHEC.

The IFES ERA also worked with the new translator in the Media Section on news style and English language to ensure prompt uploading of electoral news stories and ensure that the international media were able to access information.

Following IFES' advice, the Media Section was using the media monitoring equipment to monitor electoral breaches by the media and political entities and recordings of media material are being sent to the BoC for action.

Finally, the IFES ERA also advised the Public Outreach Department on providing more impactful IHEC branding for the results announcement press conference.

3.4.2 Review and Production of Outreach and Voter Information Materials

IFES ERA assisted the IHEC with printed materials and publications by reviewing and providing feedback on the content. IFES also provided technical advice on the electronic cards voter education campaign to the Public Outreach Department (POD) on an on-going basis. Assistance has also been provided to the Electoral Media Section during daily meetings on the themes and messaging for the PSAs. Assistance has also been provided to the Electoral Media Section during 'at desk' meetings around the themes and messaging for the PSAs.

The IFES ERA recommendations around the increased use of social media and better integration between platforms were achieved including posting the PSAs on the YouTube platform and on the IHEC website. She also advised on a new app for Smart phones which was developed by the IHEC and on the hacking of the website which took place on the eve of the CoR elections. Advice was also given to increase the visibility of women in the PSAs and motivation to vote.

Activity 3.5: Outreach to Political Entities

Building on the IFES ERA advice in the communications strategy to increase outreach to political entities, on April 19 the IHEC held a conference for the political entities and local non-governmental organizations (NGOs) to explain the polling and counting procedures. The IHEC Commissioners provided presentations on seat allocation formula and the IHEC staff members, including trainers who were trained at the IFES ToT Media Workshop, delivered lectures and practical exercises on the electronic cards procedures. Most questions from the political entities pertained to the security and potential malfunction of the verification devices.

Activity 3.7: Civil Society Sub-grants Program

As part of its second round of sub-grants, IFES selected six NGOs from throughout Iraq to implement projects that target women (including rural women, widows, IDPs, disabled and illiterate women); first time voters; youth (including rural youth and youth without IDs); the rural population; and vulnerable communities (such as widows, IDPs, elderly voters, people with disabilities) as well as the general public.

The projects were implemented in Erbil, Sulaymaniyah, Basrah, Kirkuk, Dhi Qar, Baghdad, Nineveh, Salah ad Din, Diyala, Anbar, Karbala, Wasit, and Diwaniyah. The total value of the awarded sub-grants is $595,732.

IFES is still analyzing the data and deliverables received from the NGOs but estimated outreach through activities such as workshops, trainings, conferences, and seminars is about 20,000.

During the process of implementation of the projects, NGOs collaborated and were in touch with their local GEO offices, who often also sent representatives at events organized by the NGOs.

IFES also shared with the NGOs IHEC voter outreach materials (in Arabic and Kurdish) for use/adaptation for pertinent activities of the NGOs.

One of the NGOs was running a cross-regional project and reported difficulties in implementing some of its activities in Anbar, due to the deteriorating security conditions there.

IV.   FUTURE ACTIVITIES

Table 3: IFES-Facilitated Workshops, July - September 2014[2]

Workshop title	Targeted group (# of participants)	Venue	Duration	Proposed date
The 2014 Iraq Kurdistan Region (IKR) Governorate Council Elections lessons learned workshop	Governorate Electoral Offices (GEOs) of IKR	Erbil	2 days	July 21 - 22
Elections Disputes Resolution (EDR) Training	No and GEOs LC&C Section	Erbil	3 days	August
Workshop for the Central and Branch Recruiting Committees on Staff Hiring Procedures	Central and Branch Recruiting Committees	Erbil	2 days	August 10-13
Continuous Voter Education Campaign Planning Workshop	No and GEOs POD staff	Erbil	3 days	August 11-13
Media Section Lessons Learned Workshop	No and GEOs Media Section staff	Erbil	3 days	August 25-27
The Lessons learned Workshop on Political Entities Agents and Observers Accreditation Procedures	Members of the Political Entities Agents and Observers Accreditation Committee	Erbil	2 days	September 1-3
The Lessons Learned Workshop on Special and General Voting	No and GEOs Directors and Managers	Erbil	3 days	September 8-10
Human Resources Management and Development Workshop	No and GEOs HR Section staff	Erbil	3 days	TBD

V.   QUARTERLY PROJECT BURN RATE

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[2] This chart is indicative of IFES workshops in the next quarter. Dates and content are subject to change pending operational requirements and IHEC approvals.

VI.   CRITICAL ASSUMPTIONS UPDATE

This past quarter presented ESP with major challenges to one of its critical assumptions due to escalated violence in the country, which had began a few months prior to the election and culminated in the aftermath of the announcement of electoral results.

The assumption **that** *a secure environment is key to successful implementation of project activities* was challenged. During the period, a substantial part of the country's territory was taken over by Sunni extremists, thus sparking national, regional and global alarm over the security and political situation in Iraq. There was a frenzied media reporting of an impending assault on Baghdad; Shia clerics called yound men to arms, which resulted in thousand of Shia either joining the army or forming militias, thus sparking fear of further sectarian clashes (reports estimated that 75,000 southern Shi'a - and possibly many more - have taken up call to arms); Peshmerga battled ISIS in the north in an attempt to secure the Kurdish territory and the 'boundary' between the Kurdish Region and ISIS controlled territory was regularly tested; the Peshmerga were able to free Kirkuk from the grip of the extremists and have managed to maintain their positions there; significant numbers of refugees fled into Kurdistan looking for shelter from the violence; Arab-Kurdish relations also sustained an additional deterioration as; and the Syrian-Iraqi border remained porous and allowed for entry of ISIS elements into Iraq.

In the meantime, Arab-Kurdish relations soured. On June 28, the leader of Asaib Ahl al Haq (AAH) warned Iraq's Kurds not to exploit the situation by engaging in a 'land grab', adding that Kirkuk belongs to the whole of Iraq. The comments were almost certainly a direct response to President Barzani's visit to Kirkuk, which the Peshmerga secured.

Internationally, Iran intervened in the crisis by sending elite troops to secure the Baghdad belt; Saudi Arabia gave an apparent warning to arch enemy Iran by saying outside powers should not intervene in neighbouring Iraq; and the US was asked for intervention into the conflict in Iraq and entertained various options, including cooperation with Iran, to provide assistance to Iraq's failing ISF and failing government structures. The US reaction to the crisis was to send 300 military advisors at the end of June, but that there would be "no boots on the ground." Nevertheless, on June 16, President Obama authorized 275 troops to protect the American Embassy in Iraq and, at the end of june, he authorized 200 U.S. additional troops to secure the embassy as well as Baghdad's international airport.

By mid-June, ISIS' advance was slowed. But the brutality continued as cyberspace became another venue for ISIS to spread its terror messaging. ISIS released images showing brutal mass executions of captured Iraqi soldiers and policemen. ISIS have claimed that 1700 former soldiers, policemen and other 'enemies and criminals' had been executed since the fall of Mosul. The claim and release of the images was a calculated ISIS effort to incite sectarian hatred. These videos would have been seen by the mass of Shi'a recruits into the Iraqi Army and retribution would be likely particularly when poorly trained, poorly commanded forces move northwards to confront ISIS in staunch Sunni areas. The existing mainstream Iraqi Army

had already had severe discipline problems and commanders were likely going to have even more difficulty restraining a growing irregular force.

At the end of June, the ISIS claimed universal authority when it dropped the local element in its name and said its leader Abu Bakr al-Baghdadi was now caliph of the Muslim world - a medieval title last widely recognised in the Ottoman sultan deposed 90 years ago after World War One.

After the announcement of the election results, the government formation process faced a stalemate, as was widely predicted. The majority of the polemic centered around the possibility of Prime Minster Nouri Al-Maliki serving another term in office. The idea is widely rejected within Iraq and also not a favored option internationally.

Internally, the president of Iraq's Kurdistan Region, Massoud Barzani, threatened to hold a referendum on renegotiating the autonomous region's relationship with Baghdad if incumbent Iraqi Prime Minister Nuri Al-Maliki wins a third term in office. Meanwhile, Maliki managed to gain the support of a number of smaller blocs in Iraq's parliament, bringing the number of seats controlled by his allies to 112 by the end of May. However, he had been unable up to that point to attract allies away from the larger parliamentary blocs in his quest for the 165 seats necessary for a majority.

VII. CONCLUSIONS

IFES' accomplishments in Q3FY14 continued with the successful implementation of the ESP. IFES provided essential operational and IT/ITC support to the IHEC during preparations and conduct of the CoR and IKR GC elections and was pivotal in the implementation of the AVR process.

In addition, IFES provided forums to streamline the public outreach campaign for the CoR elections and corresponding AVR and electronic cards projects. IFES also contributed to the long-term sustainable future of the IHEC by providing assistance in OCV, AVR implementation, and contingency planning for the electoral operations in Anbar. The IHEC management and staff have praised IFES' ability to react quickly to training needs and to implement high quality trainings and workshops.

Considering this context, two conclusions can be formulated from the past three months of programming. First, with the IHEC's dedication to adopting new technologies in Iraqi elections including the successful implementation of the first stage of the AVR and distribution of the electronic cards, the Commission once again proved to be capable of conducting smooth and effective preparations for electoral events, and also demonstrated a willingness to implement innovations.

Hovever, IFES anticipation that immediately after the elections results announcement and complaints adjudication, about significant progress on the IHEC strategic planning process and organizational capacity building activities has not materialized due to security situation in Iraq.

On June 17, due to the escalating conflict in Iraq and following the posture of USAID to send some of its staff to either Erbil, Basrah, or outside the country to work remotely as a precautionary measure, IFES-Iraq evacuated the IFES expat team based in Baghdad. The IFES-Iraq expat team has been working remotely and will return to Baghdad as the conditions permit. IFES-Iraq Chief of Party, accompanied by the Local National Project Manager, relocated to Erbil to manage project affairs. At the time of writing this report, the IFES expat team has still staying out of Baghdad and implementation of a direct technical assistance and program activities has been limited.